

**For Immediate Release
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**DCS CREATES COMMITTEE ON MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS
Standing committee seeks strategies for agency-wide diversity and cultural competency**

Nashville, Tenn - The Department of Children's Services has created the Committee on Multicultural Affairs, a permanent body dedicated to strategizing solutions and generating recommendations to improve departmental diversity. The committee holds its second meeting from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Thu., Dec. 2, and 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Fri., Dec. 3, at Paris Landing State Park in Buchanan, Tenn. The group held its first introductory and organizational meeting in September at the Center for Adoption in Nashville.

The Committee on Multicultural Affairs is an effort by the department's Division for Diversity Initiatives, formerly known as both EEO/Title VI and the Office of Civil Rights, and fulfills a goal set forth by the Path to Excellence Implementation Plan. The Path to Excellence was created to provide the structure necessary for DCS to be compliant with the Brian A. Settlement Agreement. The plan focuses on a set of desired child welfare outcomes and goals in eight key domains: Leadership and Management, Creating and Maintaining a Diverse and Qualified Workforce, Child and Family Team Meetings, Child Protective Services, Placement Process, Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Home Development and Support, Resource Development and Quality Assurance and Continuous Quality Improvement.

Comprised of a variety of DCS employees, including case managers, team leaders, juvenile justice representatives, program directors and others, the committee focuses on the successful integration and purposeful, strategic implementation of agency-wide cultural competency, which is defined as a set of behaviors, attitudes and policies of a system, agency or individual, which enables effective functioning in trans-cultural interactions.

"The philosophy and practice of cultural competency also address the ability of persons or programs to honor and respect cultural differences of individuals and families," said William Haynes, executive director of human resource development for DCS. "Persons involved and affected include clients, staff administering programs and staff providing services at both state and local levels."

While the committee's prevailing objective is to improve the rapport and relationships between employees, and with the public through prospective community interfacing, its imminent goal is to develop a plan for intra-agency cultural competency and the development of a curriculum to be incorporated into employee pre-service training. In addressing the agency's work in the communities it serves, the committee plans to address issues intrinsic to diversity, including training and education that will facilitate in better serving various racial, ethnic and economic groups, including those with limited English proficiency (LEP), who comprise a growing segment of the state's immigrant population.

The Committee on Multicultural Affairs will also explore a variety of other issues, such as the recruitment and retention of minorities, the use of minority contractors and other issues related to the department's goal of developing a diverse and qualified workforce, as outlined in the Path to Excellence Implementation Plan.

"Diversity is about more than race," Haynes said. "Issues of regionalism and sub-cultural mores and attitudes are also components of cultural competence."

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services was established to provide the best possible care for children and youth who are in state custody, or at significant risk of entering custody, and their families. Services provided by DCS include child protective services, foster care, adoption, programs for delinquent youth, probation/aftercare, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for identified youth.

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